



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Fish & Wildlife News

Summer 2005

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The Toki and the Condor: One Recovery Helps Another



Two White Crested Ibis, known as the Toki in Japan, where the bird has significant historical and cultural importance, negotiate over rights to a twig at the Sado Toki Conservation Center, a captive breeding facility off Japan's western coast. Members of the Toki restoration team recently visited with members of the California Condor Recovery program in Ventura, California. Photo: Japanese Ministry of the Environment.

The Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex welcomed three members of Japan's White Crested Ibis Recovery Program in March. The Japanese team sought information on the captive breeding and field reintroduction efforts of the California Condor Recovery Program, managed by refuge staff in Ventura, California.

The White Crested Ibis (*Nipponia nippon*), known as the Toki in Japanese and a bird with significant historical and cultural importance to the island nation, is extinct in the wild in Japan. The Toki project is one of Japan's priority conservation efforts, and is currently in a captive breeding phase on Sado Island at the Sado Toki Conservation Center, located off Japan's western coast. The captive breeding facility has produced more than 50 birds from three founding birds obtained from China. The Japanese team hopes to begin reintroducing the Toki to the wild within another three years.

The decline of the California condor and the Toki share some common causes such as loss of habitat, pesticide use and being

killed for collection of feathers or as the result of being blamed for crop or livestock losses. The Toki project team discussed public perceptions and Condor Program outreach efforts and explained that their team faces an educational challenge in Japan from rice farmers, who believe that the Toki damages their seedlings.

Following the Toki team visit, the staff at Hopper Mountain have put the Japanese in touch with rice farmers in California's Central Valley who provide wetland habitat for wildlife through innovative land management practices. Marc Weitzel, the Hopper Mountain project leader, said, "Reintroducing species that have gone extinct in the wild is a complicated process and the Condor and Toki projects share many of the same challenges. We hope that our experiences can be of assistance. We look forward to supporting the Toki Project as it moves closer to reintroduction and complete recovery."

*Marc Weitzel and Denise Stockton,
Hopper Mountain National
Wildlife Refuge Complex,
Ventura, California*

Secretary Norton Hails Bird Habitat Conservation Partnerships

The greatest threat to birds—and to all wildlife—is the destruction and degradation of habitat. Of the more than 800 species of migratory birds that spend all or part of their lives in the United States, more than 40 percent are endangered, threatened, or imperiled. The underlying reason for their decline: habitat loss.

The North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) is a voluntary, public-private coalition dedicated to conserving habitat for birds throughout the continent. Vital to that capability is the need for more resources, human, technical, and financial, and improved cooperation among the organizations, bird initiatives, and all the nations of North America.

On May 17, 2005, in commemoration of the 12th annual International Migratory Bird Day, Interior Secretary Gale Norton signed the NABCI Declaration of Intent with Canada and Mexico to strengthen bird habitat conservation throughout the continent. This important document will serve as a public expression of support for voluntary trilateral cooperation to advance comprehensive bird conservation in North America.

The Declaration will apply to all the approximately 1,100 species of native birds in North America, including both migrants and residents. Many of these species require immediate conservation attention as their populations continue to decline and their habitats continue to shrink. Other countries of the hemisphere can join this important effort, and as signatories, can add their native bird species to the list of species covered by the Declaration.

The Declaration formalizes the process for carrying out integrated bird conservation and can be used by anyone to increase the profile and recognition of Joint Ventures and other partnerships implementing Partners In Flight's Continental Landbird Conservation Plan, the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan, the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and State and regional plans for game species.

Service Veteran H. Dale Hall Is Director Nominee

To implement the declaration, NABCI participants are developing an Action Plan around six goals: building and sustaining regional alliances in Mexico; securing sustainable funding for critical habitat projects; developing needed decision support tools; strategically engaging other countries; securing the commitment of other partners and prioritizing marine ecosystem issues.

In the meantime, continental coordination is moving forward as Mexican regional alliances continue to take shape. Mexican partners continue to work on habitat projects in the priority regions of Laguna Madre, Marismas Nacionales and Janos, with joint venture colleagues in the United States and Canada. For example, a grant from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act provided partners in Marismas, Sinaloa and Nayarit with seed money to develop a science-based plan to conserve and manage a high priority wetland region for birds in Marismas. The plan will identify gaps in research and monitoring, high priority habitat projects, and link to Canadian and U.S. partners conserving migratory and breeding habitat for same bird species.

On the national front, the U.S. NABCI Committee, a forum of representatives from Federal and State agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and the bird conservation initiatives, is carrying out its 2005 work plan focused on six priority issues: communications, monitoring, conservation design, international conservation and support, and private landowner technical assistance. A new Monitoring Subcommittee is producing a report that identifies how to put in place effective and efficient monitoring programs capable of determining bird population status and trends and limiting habitat and land use factors.

*Roxanne E. Bogart, NABCI,
Essex Junction, Vermont*

U.S. NABCI Committee

Bruce McCloskey, Chair, representing the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Matt Hogan, representing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Richard Bishop, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, representing the North American Waterfowl Management Plan

Ellie Cohen, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, representing the U.S. Shorebird Conservation Plan

vacant, representing the National Flyway Council

Breck Carmichael, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, representing the Resident Game Birds Working Group

vacant, representing the Migratory Shore and Uplands Game Birds Working Group

Val Mezanis, USDA Forest Service, representing federal agencies

Gary Myers, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, representing Partners in Flight

Jim Kushlan, Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, representing the North American Waterbird Conservation Plan

David Pashley, American Bird Conservancy, representing nongovernmental organizations

Steve Williams, representing Wildlife Management Institute

Scott Yaich, representing Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

H. Dale Hall, a 27-year career employee of the Service, has been nominated by President Bush to serve as the next Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Hall has served in Albuquerque, NM as the Southwest Regional Director since 2001.

“Dale brings to the job a wealth of experience and a record of being part of the answer to complex problems,” said Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton. “As a qualified scientist, he has worked on everything from the Northwest Forest Plan to the California Bay/Delta water settlement, to the plan for restoring the Everglades. He has dealt with wetlands across the nation and water issues on the Middle Rio Grande and the Missouri Rivers. In every instance he has sought consensus and solutions. I am confident he will continue that record.”

Hall said he was “humbled and honored” to be nominated by the President and to have the confidence of Secretary Norton. “I’m looking forward to this position and to using my experience to lead our outstanding employees in finding science-based, cooperative solutions to the tough issues before the Service.”

Hall has previously served as Deputy Director of the Southeast Region and a term as Assistant Regional Director for Ecological Services in Portland. He started his career with the Service in 1978 when he did field work in wetlands ecology in Vicksburg, Mississippi. He holds a bachelor’s degree in biology and chemistry from Cumberland College in Kentucky and a master’s in fisheries science from Louisiana State University.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee held a confirmation hearing September 22 on Hall’s nomination, where Hall expressed his commitment to working with partners to further the country’s conservation goals.

Hall has been honored with the Department of the Interior’s Meritorious Service Award. He and his wife, Sarah, have three children.

On the cover:

An afternoon snack. A first year Kodiak brown bear cub, also known to wildlife managers as a ‘COY’ (Cub of the Year), takes a break from eating salmon at Frazer Fish Passage on Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, in Alaska. Salmon run a gauntlet of fishing bears below the fish ladder which helps them reach their spawning grounds. FWS Photo: Steve Hillebrand.

Responding to a Spill: A Well-Oiled Machine



Fish and Wildlife Service biologists worked with Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services and Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research, Inc., to capture and rehabilitate birds last November following a tanker spill in the Delaware River near Philadelphia. FWS photo.

When the tanker Athos I leaked 265,000 gallons of crude oil from holes in its cargo and ballast tanks into the Delaware River near Philadelphia last November, it dumped oil along more than 57 miles of shoreline. To top it off, the oil spill came during peak Canada goose and waterfowl migration along the Atlantic flyway. The news hit most major media outlets along the eastern seaboard.

Coast Guard in the morning for their daily updates. I answered questions from the news media about how oil affects wildlife and about state and federal waterfowl hunting restrictions. We held press availabilities to celebrate the release of birds successfully cleaned and rehabilitated by Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research, Inc. I also arranged for Service staff to

participate in a town hall meeting the Coast Guard hosted in New Jersey to address public concerns.

We worked 12-hour days in the Philadelphia Holiday Inn for seven days. The phones rang all 12 hours with inquiries primarily from New Jersey about the extent of the spill. By mid-December, we wrapped up our participation in the JIC.

Service biologists worked with Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services and Tri-State to capture and rehabilitate hundreds of oiled birds, as well as some small mammals and reptiles. Other Service staff surveyed the spill's effects on wildlife habitat.

Amid the dizzying chaos of cell phones and Pepto Bismol, I was amazed at the efficiency of an 1,800-person operation. Every federal, state, health and emergency management agency has a very distinct role at an oil spill. Each partner's strengths and uniqueness work together toward a common goal.

Valerie Fellows, Chesapeake Bay Field Office, Annapolis, Maryland

When a catastrophic oil spill occurs, the Unified Command immediately sets up the Joint Information Center (JIC) to handle inquiries from the public and press. The Unified Command includes the U.S. Coast Guard, representatives of the responsible party, affected states and local governments, as well as the Fish and Wildlife Service. JIC is the channel that all agencies use to coordinate the release of public information, and it serves as the information warehouse for updates on field activities.

I welcomed the opportunity to pull a shift at JIC, and collected information each evening on how many Service folks were in the field recovering oiled wildlife and how many animals were captured (alive and dead). I reported that information to the



The steel bridge over a bayou at the Brierwood Unit of the Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge; refuge management credited Rich Carroll, a heavy maintenance equipment operator, with single-handedly replacing an older bridge, earning him the unofficial title of unsung hero. FWS photo.

A Boisterous Day on the Mall at Start of National Fishing and Boating Week



Some of the 450 students from Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia at Constitution Gardens on the National Mall on June 6 at the kickoff of National Fishing and Boating Week. FWS photo.

Some 360 students from schools in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia gave a boisterous start to National Fishing and Boating Week at Constitution Gardens on the National Mall on June 6, beginning a nationwide celebration of two hugely popular national pastimes.

Officials from the Fish and Wildlife Service, the event's lead sponsor, and a number of other public agencies and conservation organizations, led the students in an official castoff.

Washington and Virginia news media, contacted by Service Public Affairs staff, covered the story and this year's event resulted in a rare, four-column, four-color front page photo in *The Washington Post*, along with coverage on several television and radio stations.

The observance continued across the country through June 13. Co-sponsored by the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, the week drew thousands of boaters and anglers to hundreds of tournaments, clinics and educational programs throughout the United States.

"Recreational fishing and boating are among America's favorite pastimes," said Matt Hogan, the Service's Acting Director. "I welcome the chance to introduce another generation to the excitement and exhilaration of both boating and fishing."

The Constitution Gardens event was one of more than a dozen separate boating and fishing events scheduled in Washington, Virginia and Maryland and throughout the country. The students, from Terrell, Ludlow-Taylor and Smothers Elementary Schools in Washington, Garrison Middle

School in Baltimore and Long Branch Elementary School in Arlington, were all fourth, fifth and sixth graders. They were supplied with fishing gear and invited to try their hand at catching sunfish, channel catfish, largemouth bass and more in the Gardens pond, located between 17th and 23rd Streets at Constitution Avenue.

Volunteers from the Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Fisheries and Habitat Conservation and other programs were on hand with advice and help for the young first-time anglers. Other partners include the American Sportfishing Association, Trout Unlimited, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, District of Columbia Fisheries and Wildlife Division, National Park Service, NOAA Fisheries, Future Fisherman Foundation, Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Most States sponsored Free Fishing Days in connection with National Fishing and Boating Week as well as thousands of fishing clinics, casting contests, derbies, fish hatchery open houses and other family-oriented activities. Hundreds of communities sponsor their own fishing and boating-related events.

The Sportfishing and Boating Safety Act of 1998 dedicated \$36 million of Sport Fish Restoration program funds for a five-year national outreach and communication effort, administered by the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation. Partners include the fishing, boating and conservation communities, state and federal fisheries program, natural resources and tourism agencies and other interested organizations. Foundation funding is provided under a cooperative agreement with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Ken Burton, Public Affairs, Washington, DC

Oregon Ecological Services State Office Honored for Transportation Stewardship

The Service's Oregon Ecological Services State Office was recognized in two separate award ceremonies on Earth Day in Washington, DC for helping plan an environmental review of the 10-year, \$1.3 billion Oregon Transportation Investment Act (OTIA) State Bridge Delivery Program.

Service biologist David Leal accepted the Services' 2005 Transportation Environmental Stewardship Excellence Award for the Oregon State Office in a ceremony with Acting Director Matt Hogan.

"All those involved in this effort are an inspiration for future transportation and resource agency partnerships," Hogan said. "Working together lightens the load for all of us."

The Oregon State Office was honored earlier in the day at a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) award ceremony.

The bridge program will repair or replace hundreds of bridges built in the 1950s and 1960s on state highways throughout Oregon that are nearing the end of their design life.

Paul Hoffman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, praised the Oregon Office's support of this state-based approach. "The Oregon State Office's support of this state and local effort embodies the spirit of President Bush's Executive Order on Cooperative Conservation," Hoffman said.

ODOT in partnership with the Service and other stakeholders (in an effort known as "Xtreme Collaboration") developed a single set of performance standards for the entire bridge program—the first statewide streamlined permitting effort of its kind in the nation. Cynthia Burbank, FHWA Associate Administrator for Planning, Environment, and Realty commended the early and continual involvement of the Service as a critical component of successful stewardship and streamlining efforts.

The programmatic permit for more than 300 state bridges—also referred to as the "one-process" approach—provides designers with site-specific environmental data and performance standards before they develop bridge designs. This effort is anticipated to save taxpayers 15 percent of the initial design costs and shave a year or two off the program schedule. By designing the bridge into the ecological context of the planning area, environmental impacts will not only be avoided or minimized, but hydrologic function and other ecological processes are expected to be restored in some areas. This batched programmatic effort provides the framework for addressing all future bridge projects in the State.

"The Oregon Department of Transportation in partnership with the Fish and Wildlife Service has found one of the many ways that we can provide for both a healthy environment and a healthy economy," said Mamie Parker, Assistant Director for Fisheries and Habitat Conservation. "I'm very proud of the role our people played in the project."



Service Acting Director Matt Hogan (left), presents David Leal, a Service biologist with the Oregon State Office in Portland, with the Service's 2005 Transportation Environmental Stewardship Excellence award for the Oregon State Office's help in planning an environmental review of a 10-year, \$1.3 billion Oregon State Bridge Delivery Program. FWS photo.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Transportation Environmental Stewardship Excellence Award is awarded every two years on Earth Day. The Colorado Field Office received the first award, in 2003, for their partnership efforts with Colorado Department of Transportation toward the development of the Short Grass Prairie Initiative.

Calls for 2005 nominations highlighted President Bush's Executive Order on Cooperative Conservation by encouraging applications where Fish and Wildlife Service offices facilitated state and locally based conservation efforts.

Ken Burton, Public Affairs, Washington, DC

Pallid Sturgeon — The Missouri River Dinosaur

It has been touted as a living fossil, the Missouri River dinosaur and derided as the ugliest fish in North America. The early fossil record indicates its rise in existence during the Cenozoic Era, and for 60 million years it has thrived in the muddy rivers of the North American continent.

However, in less than a century, overfishing, caviar trade, habitat destruction, pollution, dam construction, changes in river flows and hybridization have forced the pallid sturgeon to the brink of extinction. Biologists estimate that all of the wild sturgeon in the Missouri River will be gone in about 10 years.

The Fish and Wildlife Service listed the pallid sturgeon as an endangered species in 1990, and since then, biologists have worked hard to save this species. A coalition of federal, state and tribal agencies, conservation organizations, and concerned citizens has come together, each playing a critical role in trying to recover this ancient fish.

The Army Corps of Engineers, Missouri Department of Conservation, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, and the Service in Regions 3 and 6 are all working cooperatively to implement a program to assess pallid sturgeon and other native species throughout the Missouri River, from Fort Peck Dam in Montana to the mouth near St. Louis.

Columbia Fishery Resources Office and the Neosho National Fish Hatchery, both located in Missouri, are just two of the Service offices in Region 3 that are actively engaged in pallid sturgeon recovery efforts on the Missouri River. Ecological Services Field Offices and National Wildlife Refuges are also critical to the effort.

The pallid sturgeon is one of eight species of sturgeon found in North America and one of only three that live entirely in fresh water. They grow to lengths exceeding six feet and weigh more than 100 pounds, and they are thought to live beyond 60 years. Female pallid sturgeon reach spawning age at 15 to 20 years, and males at five to seven years. While science cannot pin down the exact reason for their decline, the pallid sturgeon's unique life characteristics—long life and slow growth—may have

contributed. Long-lived species are more sensitive to overfishing, accumulate toxins over time and take longer for these species to replenish themselves. These qualities, combined with habitat loss, have spelled disaster for the species.

Neosho NFH is one of eight federal and state hatcheries raising pallid sturgeon for stocking into the Missouri River. All pallid sturgeon raised at hatcheries are tagged with an individually numbered tag before they are put into the river. This helps biologists distinguish between the wild and hatchery raised pallid sturgeon and provides important information to help understand more about this species and what can be done to save it.

Only in their fourth year of raising pallid sturgeon, the staff at the Neosho NFH are increasing the number of pallid sturgeon raised at the hatchery, both by refining their culture techniques and by increasing the amount of tank space. In 2004, the original sturgeon building was expanded through a partnership with the Corps. This new addition allows the hatchery to raise an estimated 4,000 pallid sturgeon each year and up to an additional 1,000 under ideal conditions.

The Corps and the Service are working together on another project to construct a new building for culturing pallid sturgeon at the Neosho NFH. This new building will enhance the hatchery's ability to rear pallid sturgeon.

The pallid sturgeon raised by the hatcheries are critical for the recovery of the species. By adding hatchery-raised pallid sturgeon to the wild populations, biologists can obtain more accurate estimates of the population of wild fish by comparing them to the number of stocked fish. The hatchery-raised pallid sturgeon are released into the Missouri River, where they have a greater chance to find some of the newly created shallow water habitat that is so critical for their survival. The new habitat is courtesy of the Corps, who undertook an aggressive effort in 2004 to create an estimated 1,200 acres of new habitat.

Since 1999, Columbia FRO biologists have collected and released 84 pallid sturgeon in the Lower Missouri. Forty-two were from the more than 68,000 pallid sturgeon

stocked by federal and state hatcheries. Nineteen were wild sturgeon and 23 were of unknown origin. Also in 1999, biologists from Columbia FRO collected a larval pallid, verifying the first known case of natural reproduction in the lower Missouri River in more than 50 years. The larval fish was collected in a naturally formed side chute on the Lisbon Unit of the Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge. In 2004, the Columbia FRO had a banner year, collecting 28 pallid sturgeon, and biologists have collected 19 pallid sturgeon so far this year, including one that migrated through Gavins Point Dam. This is the second time biologists have documented a pallid sturgeon passing downstream through this dam.

Biologists are optimistic about the recovery of pallid sturgeon, though it will require additional time and dedication to discover the habits of this ancient fish and to undo a century of damage. Biologists hope that the newly created pallid sturgeon habitat, in conjunction with more natural river flows and augmentation from stocking will prove to be the successful combination for fish and wildlife recovery.

Jeff M. Finley, Columbia Fisheries Resource Office, Columbia, Missouri

For more information...

about U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pallid sturgeon programs, visit:

Columbia Fishery Resources Office
<www.fws.gov/midwest/ColumbiaFisheries>

Neosho National Fish Hatchery
<www.fws.gov/midwest/Neosho>

Columbia, Missouri Ecological Service Field Office
<www.fws.gov/midwest/ColumbiaES>

Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge
<www.fws.gov/midwest/bigmuddy>

DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge
<www.fws.gov/midwest/desoto>

New York: It Really Is For the Birds

When the nest of two red-tailed hawks named Pale Male and Lola was removed from a Park Avenue condominium last December, a lot of New Yorkers didn't like it. Some building residents said they were concerned about sanitation, privacy and unsightliness. But city residents, bird watchers or not, responded with a clear message: don't touch it.

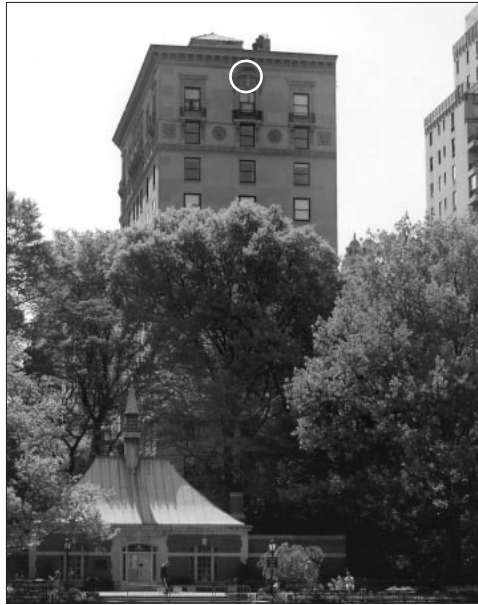
Within 48 hours, thousands of citizens registered their objections with the Fish and Wildlife Service law enforcement office at Valley Stream, NY, despite the fact that because the nest was empty, no Service permission for removal was necessary. Nonetheless, protesters staged a round-the-clock vigil outside the building where Pale Male had acquired celebrity status during 13 years of nesting. The birds became front page news around the world.

The controversy simmered for weeks before condo owners decided to install a new pigeon guard replacing the one on which Pale Male had built nests. By that time a new reality had struck home. Clearly, New Yorkers love their urban wildlife with passion.

Pale Male and Lola are exceptional. They had been subjects of a best-selling book ("Red-tails in Love") and helped a PBS documentary ("Pale Male") win an Emmy. They weren't as big as Donald Trump, but close. The birds have not only tolerated a harsh urban environment, but seem to thrive on it. New Yorkers can be a tough audience, but these birds had won some respect.

By late December, city and state officials and the New York City Audubon Society facilitated a solution. In meetings with building owners, they offered alternative solutions, the one chosen being a new pigeon guard modified to contain nesting material, waste and the remains of meals the hawks had previously jettisoned over the side of their nest. The new structure was installed in January, and in March the two hawks began building a new nest.

Meanwhile, by May, the Pale Male incident prompted a coalition of public and private partners to announce the establishment of the New York City Raptor Fund. The fund will support a range of measures to benefit raptors, including habitat



The nest of Pale Male and Lola (circled), at 927 Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, rests atop a window pediment on the building's top floor, overlooking Central Park's Model Boat Pond. FWS photo: Ron Rothschadl.

improvement, bird rehabilitation, education and interpretation. The measures will protect and support not only Pale Male, but also other raptors and migratory birds of New York City. The fund received \$100,000 from the Fish and Wildlife Service, to be distributed by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and put to work by the Audubon Society, the New York City Parks and Recreation Department, and other local cooperators. Matching funds may double the available money.

The partners look forward to expanding the fund into a collaborative effort under the Service's Urban Bird Conservation Treaty program. Such a treaty would give the partnership added recognition and the long-term stability of a contract between the city and the Service to support migratory birds and their habitat in the urban setting. Under the treaty, New Yorkers will have the ability to conserve and protect raptors and other urban birds they love so well.

The Pale Male story is ending far happier than anyone could have predicted.

Ron Rothschadl, External Affairs, Hadley, Massachusetts

An Island That Almost Vanished Is Slowly Reappearing

There was a time when pirates sailed past it. In the 1700s, it was a backdrop for Revolutionary War naval skirmishes. It once supported a small town, with cattle, a post office and a school. That was before Poplar Island, located in the Chesapeake Bay 34 miles south of Baltimore, began to disappear.

Today, Poplar Island is back, and better than ever: in the 1800s, it amounted to around 1,000 acres. By 1990, erosion had cut the island into three separate chunks of land and squeezed it to less than 10 acres. Today, thanks to a successful restoration effort led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, it has returned to 1,140 acres and may grow by another 570 acres before the project is finished.

Using soil dredged from the Baltimore shipping channel, workers are steadily rebuilding the island and restoring its habitat. When work on Poplar Island is complete, half the acreage will be turned into wetlands and half, uplands—complete with trees. The island will be a maze of smaller islands, ponds, channels and marshes. Some 40 million cubic yards of dredge material will be protected by 35,000 feet of containment dikes.

Jason Miller, a biologist assigned to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Chesapeake Bay Field Office in Annapolis, is focusing on two parts of the newest version of Poplar Island: submerged vegetation and wildlife management.

"In our line of work, it can take years or decades to glimpse real results of something you've labored on," Miller said. "With this kind of project, you can see the results in real time, and you can see more results almost with each passing month. Right before our eyes, we're building a new island, a new remote area for wildlife. To be a part of this is to be part of something very special."

"Submerged vegetation means food for ducks, and habitat for fish and even crabs," Miller added. "The island will have all of those—they're already here, in fact, and my job is to make sure the ducks and the fish and the crabs have what they need to sustain them."



Service biologist Jason Miller watched a flock of birds on Poplar Island. Miller represents one of dozens of State and Federal agencies with an interest in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-State of Maryland restoration project. FWS photo: Ken Burton.

To that end, Miller spends a lot of time monitoring the return of submerged vegetation in Poplar Island's tiny new harbor. Many of the plants are returning on their own, while a partner group from Anne Arundel Community College has pitched in and helped with seeding, adding a bit of insurance.

Miller's other job is to see that the birds that are returning to the island are taking a liking to new surroundings. They are. Already this year, there are more than 500 common tern nests on Poplar Island—the only ones in the bay. Miller also checks the small nesting islands that are “islands within an island,” that are designed to attract specific species.

So Miller, who works in close partnership with the Corps, travels regularly to the island to keep track of construction and to keep track of what kind of wildlife is already being drawn to this premier habitat restoration effort.

Miller said foxes have already discovered this potential smorgasbord and have left their home on the mainland and other islands to tiptoe across the ice in the winter. Miller has to figure ways to discourage that kind of travel; even a small fox population could wreak havoc with the larger population of birds.

“We don't have many opportunities like this one,” Miller said. “It's breathtaking in its scope and will amount to a crown jewel in the bay when it's finished. It represents engineering at its innovative best. It is the ultimate recycling project—taking dredge material from one project to benefit wildlife in another.” Miller's work is direct, but the Poplar Island project also benefits from technical expertise from other Service areas, notably the Coastal Program, which has a deep interest in Poplar Island.

Settlements on the original Poplar Island date from the 1630s, and in succeeding decades, evolved into the little town of Valliant, which supported several farms, some cattle, a post office, a school and a sawmill. Time and erosion made the small town smaller and finally pushed it into extinction in the 1920s.

But even as the island was split into separate land masses, one chunk still managed to support the Jefferson Islands Club, which provided weekend retreats for Franklin D. Roosevelt and later, Harry S. Truman.

“We're privileged to be a part of this island's restoration,” said Mamie Parker, Assistant Director for Fisheries and Habitat Conservation. “We have always identified Poplar Island as a valuable nesting and nursery area and to see this multiplied in such an impressive way is very exciting. If ever there was a chance to make Mother Nature smile, this is it.”



Two principals involved in the Poplar Island restoration—the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State of Maryland—are identified on the welcoming sign. The \$400 million effort should be finished by 2020 and will include a wide variety of vegetation, from grasses to trees. FWS photo: Ken Burton

Ospreys, egrets, terns, herons, eagles, double-breasted cormorants, black ducks and other wild fowl have already discovered an enlarged Poplar Island, unfazed by workers and heavy equipment that move and shape the dredge material that is bulldozed onto the island from barges. Diamondback terrapins are nesting in large numbers on the island, predominantly along the sandy beaches of the southeast shoreline. Last year there were approximately 185 known nests, accounting for more than 1,000 hatchlings.

When the Baltimore shipping channel is being dredged, barges operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week to move two million yards of fill, from September through March of each year. The work began in 1998 and Scott Johnson, the man who manages the project for the Corps, estimates that work won't be finished until 2020, at a total cost of about \$400 million, with 75 percent of the cost borne by the Federal government and the remaining 25 percent, by the State of Maryland.

Ken Burton, Public Affairs, Washington, DC

Senator Lincoln Chafee Joins in Celebrating International Migratory Bird Day



Senator Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island releases a red-tailed hawk in observance of International Migratory Bird Day at Trustum Pond National Wildlife Refuge. The hawk was rehabilitated after suffering an injured wing in a collision with a car. FWS photo.

Braving a rainy, cold and windy day, Senator Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island joined the celebration of International Migratory Bird Day at Trustum Pond National Wildlife Refuge on May 7.

Senator Chafee released a rehabilitated red-tailed hawk that had suffered a wing injury after colliding with a car near the refuge on highway U.S. 1. To the delight and cheers of the onlookers, the hawk flew from the Senator's hands over a grassland to perch in a nearby tree. The hawk was brought back to health by raptor rehabilitator Vivian Maxson of Born to Be Wild Nature Center.

The event included nature crafts, bird banding information, guided walks, educational displays, chances to earn a "junior birder" patch, and a live bird of prey demonstration. International Migratory Bird Day celebrates the journey of migratory birds between their breeding ground in North America and their wintering ground in Mexico, Central and South America.

For more information about International Migratory Bird Day, visit us at www.fws.gov/birds/imbd.

Janis Nepshinsky, Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex, Charlestown, Rhode Island

Brook Trout Study Underway in Whittlesey Creek

The Ashland Fisheries Resource Office (FRO) and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources are conducting an experiment to determine whether a migratory population of brook trout can be established in Whittlesey Creek by stocking two strains of fish with a known lake life history.

The experiment will compare survival and behavior of the Siskiwit Bay and Tobin Harbor strains of coaster brook trout being stocked in the stream. In April and May, biologists from Ashland and Iron River National Fish Hatchery surgically implanted radio transmitters in 19 adult brook trout reared at Iron River. The transmitter tagged fish and 50 adults were stocked in May and will be tracked by land, water and air to examine migratory behavior and habitat usage. A stationary receiving unit, placed at the mouth of the creek, will detect movement in and out of the stream over the next year.

In addition, biologists stocked 20,000 spring fingerlings, split 50/50 between the two strains. These fish will need to adapt to their new environment and compete with other salmonines in the stream to survive and contribute to a migratory population. The spring fingerlings are one of four life stages being stocked, along with eggs, yearlings and adults.

In September, Ashland FRO and Wisconsin DNR, with assistance from Whittlesey Creek NWR and Trout Unlimited, will conduct an annual survey to determine size and abundance of salmonines in the stream. They will collect tissue samples from brook trout and send them for analysis to determine the strain of origin.

This information will allow biologists to evaluate survival and growth of each strain stocked. Eventually, data collected from this experiment will contribute to the scientific knowledge of coaster brook trout rehabilitation in Lake Superior.

Henry Quinlan, Ashland FRO, Ashland, Wisconsin and Nick Grueneis, Iron River NFH, Iron River, Wisconsin

First Day of Non-Sale Event Is a Big Sell

A bad thing happened at 4:30 pm June 29, the night before the annual Duck Stamp "First Day of Sale" event: we found out we wouldn't be able to sell Duck Stamps at the planned event location in a Senate caucus room.

We will leave aside the question of why no one had mentioned this when we originally planned the event, and why efforts to find a compromise at the eleventh hour failed. Our immediate problem was—what to do about the fact that the Secretary of the Interior, 20 Members of Congress, the Duck Stamp artist, the judges, the Junior Duck Stamp artist, the Wetlands Conservation Award winners, stamp collectors and other dignitaries were scheduled to show up for a "First Day of Sale Event" where there would be No Sales.

What happened next was, as Acting Director Matt Hogan later put it, an example of "The Fish and Wildlife Service at its best." First Congressional Affairs staff hastened up to Interior's 6th Floor to see if we could find another solution with the help of Departmental Congressional staff. When it became clear all possible avenues had been exhausted, staff from the Duck Stamp Office, Migratory Birds and External Affairs convened a hasty conference call and pulled together to solve the problem. By 5:45 we had a game plan that included calling all 20 Congressional offices to let them know the situation and arranging to get a Postal Service truck parked on a nearby corner so that we could purchase Duck Stamps there. Then we organized our staffs and told them that since we couldn't sell Duck Stamps inside the building, we would sell them outside.

As the Event Day dawned, none of us was sure this plan was going to work. And there was plenty of last-minute confusion, as we had to explain to various officials how the event was going to work—until finally the bus left to take us there.

The shuttle itself almost became a headline, as jumpy Capitol Hill security police—having been through an emergency evacuation of the Capitol on the evening of the 29th—decided our bus was not supposed to park and unload in our prearranged location. Clint Riley handled this with his usual cool, maintaining that he was only following orders and persuading the police officer to allow us to get off the bus without anyone being arrested, or worse.

And the event came off great! The District of Columbia Postmaster, Delores Killette, presented Interior Secretary Gale Norton with a Duck Stamp and Junior Duck Stamp she purchased earlier that day. External Affairs and Migratory Birds staff ran to the truck and bought stamps for interested event attendees. We shot video and still photos and made sure Members of Congress got their pictures taken with their winning artists. Senator Blanche Lincoln welcomed the crowd and stayed for the entire event. Acting Duck Stamp Chief Steve Bekkerus handled the last

minute changes in the program with ease. The Junior Duck Stamp artist, Kerissa Nelson, stole the show with a story of her first duck hunting trip and how she learned conservation ethics from her family. Senators Tim Johnson and John Thune and Congresswoman Stephanie Herseth introduced the Federal Duck Stamp artist, Mark Anderson, of South Dakota, and staff and volunteers from Patuxent National Wildlife Refuge handed out programs and provided information.

Overall the event turned out to be one of the best Duck Stamp events ever. It was moving to see the support for the Duck Stamp program and for the Refuge System. Despite its rough start, our First Day of Non-Sale Event was a hit, thanks to a lot of behind-the-scenes hard work and the overwhelming positive feeling on Capitol Hill for the Duck Stamp and Junior Duck programs.

Megan Durham, External Affairs, Washington, DC

Alaska Eagle Release. Migratory Bird Day at the Alaska Zoo—another success! This partnership event between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska Zoo was once again a success—763 people celebrated Migratory Bird Day at the Alaska Zoo. Visitors learned about birds, different hazards birds face during migration, and took part in a spectacular Bald Eagle release. Special activities included a "Collision Game", "Be a Pilot Biologist", and getting up-close and personal with live education birds.

The day could not have been possible if not for the hard work and dedication of both Service and Zoo volunteers. The following Service employees deserve a pat on the back for coming out on the weekend and giving their time at this event: Lucy Odden, Kent Wohl, Doug Alcorn, Cathy Rezabeck, Conni Bruse, Bob Platte, Julian Fischer, Bill and Suzie Larned, Denny Lasswy, Judy Jacobs, Rick Lanctot and Dena, Heather Lyons, Mike Stefancic, Elizabeth Labunski, Cynthia Wentworth and Lele, Cathy Pearson and Sam, Brian Glaspell, 'Nekke Colbert, and Ron Laubenstein.



A special thank you is also owed additional partner organizations that made the day a success: Bird Treatment and Learning Center; Medallion Foundation; Parrot Education and Adoption Center; King Career Center; The Alaska Sealife Center; The Imaginarium, Anchorage Golf Course and KTUU Channel 2 News.

The 24 Command Wildfire: Three Years and a Million Sagebrush Seedlings Later



Workers plant some of the one million native sagebrush seedlings in eastern Washington in the wake of the 163,000-acre wildfire four years ago, under a plan designed to stabilize shrub-steppe habitat destroyed in June 2000. FWS photo.

In late 2004, a crew of workers stooped in the cold, quiet desert of eastern Washington and planted the last of a million native sagebrush seedlings, helping heal the scars left by a 163,000-acre wildfire four years earlier.

It was the final replanting of 120 acres on the Service's 77,000-acre Fitzner/Eberhardt Arid Lands Ecology Reserve (ALE) unit of the Hanford Reach National Monument, under a plan designed to stabilize the shrub-steppe habitat destroyed by the 24 Command Fire in June 2000.

The ALE's Federal Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (BAER) plan was designed and put into action over the past three years to keep invasive weeds—especially cheatgrass—in check, and to restore the area's primary native plants: Wyoming big sagebrush and bluebunch wheatgrass. The \$5.8 million rehabilitation project was funded by the Department of the Interior's emergency stabilization and burned area rehabilitation program.

Approximately 2,000 acres in the burned area have been planted with more than one million sagebrush seedlings, and another 10,000 acres were seeded with native bunchgrasses. Research shows that the typical survival rate of transplanted sagebrush seedlings averages 20 percent. However, preliminary results on the ALE indicate an overall survival rate of 36 percent, thanks to above-normal precipitation over the past two years. It will take the seedlings about 10 years to become functional habitat, and many decades to recover completely.

Before the wildfire, the ALE was synonymous with the pristine desert conditions and relatively undisturbed sagebrush habitat that is becoming increasingly rare in the west. Refuge fire experts regularly and carefully performed controlled burns there and on the monument to get rid of invasive cheatgrass and other weeds. It was a source of life for sage grouse, sage sparrow and loggerhead shrikes. There was even a hefty elk herd with bulls that died of old age.

In 1967 this ancient stretch of desert was recognized as ecologically unique by the Atomic Energy Commission. The ALE went through several names and designations before being incorporated into national monument status in 2000 when management of the area was turned over to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In terms of ownership, the ALE still comprises the southwestern corner of the Department of Energy's Hanford Nuclear Reservation.

Before the fire the ALE was blanketed with nearly 25,000 acres of mature sagebrush stands. Replanting and reseeding are the first necessary steps, but only time can restore the characteristics of a mature sagebrush landscape and the complexities of that particular habitat.

"We've only replanted 10 percent of what was lost in the fire," said Heidi Newsome, a wildlife biologist at the monument who helped supervise the project. "We selected the highest burn-severity areas for native grass replanting to try to keep cheatgrass from invading the denuded areas, and we planted the shrubs into areas that still had decent native understory."

In four days, the eight-person planting crew planted sagebrush in block patterns, which are easier to defend in the event of a future wildfire. The block planting method also improves seed dispersal as the plants mature.

The Nature Conservancy of Washington worked with the Service to monitor the progression and effectiveness of the rehabilitation project, and created the final report. The cities of Richland, Kennewick, Pasco, West Richland and Benton City were involved in the project, as well as U.S. Department of Energy, Pacific Northwest National Labs, the local Rod and Gun Club, Boy Scouts of America, and the Washington Native Plant Society.

During 2004, approximately 51,500 Wyoming Big Sagebrush seedlings were grown from native seed collected on the monument: 40,000 plants were grown at Lucky Peak Nursery in Boise, Idaho, and 11,500 were grown at Buffaloberry Farm in McCall, Idaho. The seedlings were prepared with a root dip to aid moisture retention and increase the likelihood of survival.

Top Honors For Thorson, Sheehan

Each year, the President recognizes a small group of career Senior Executives with the President's Rank Award for exceptional long-term accomplishments. Winners are nominated by their agency, are evaluated by boards of private citizens and approved by the President.

The evaluation criteria focus on leadership and results, and the winners in 2005 included Service employee Denise Sheehan.

Denise Sheehan, Assistant Director for Budget, Planning and Human Resources, is responsible for overseeing management of the Service's \$1.2 billion annual budget preparation and implementation, strategic planning, policy and human resources for the Service's 10,000 employees. Ms. Sheehan was selected as a recipient of the Presidential Rank Award in recognition of her leadership in public administration, particularly in the area of human capital.

In addition, the Secretary each year recognizes an elite group of Department senior executives who have had special accomplishments combined with outstanding performance. The Service executive recognized in 2005 for a Silver Level Secretary's Executive Leadership Award was Robyn Thorson.

Robyn Thorson is Regional Director of the Service's Midwest Region, which includes eight Upper Midwestern States and is headquartered at Ft. Snelling, Minnesota. In 2004, Ms. Thorson launched an extensive outreach program in the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins to advance working relations, solve problems and build successes with states and other partners. The Midwest Region was instrumental in developing Secretary Norton's policies authorizing improved cost-saving and streamlined approaches for acquiring wetlands and grassland easements for Waterfowl Production Areas under the Small Wetland Acquisition Program.

Fisheries Staff Goes Fly Casting With Congress

On a cool, misty morning in April, an excited group of anglers assembled at Fletcher's Boat House on the banks of the Potomac River in anticipation of a great day of boating and fishing.

This was the 6th Annual Congressional Casting Call, sponsored each year by the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation and co-sponsored for the second year by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Reeling in lots of shad, the anglers enjoyed perfecting their fly casting, with the help of experts from the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, American Fly Fishing Trade Association, American Sportfishing Association and members of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus. Mingling with Members of Congress were Acting Fish and Wildlife Service Director Matt Hogan, Mamie Parker, Assistant Director for Fisheries and Habitat Conservation, and staff from several Fisheries Program offices.

Casting Call is an opportunity for the Fisheries Program to share accomplishments, highlight new initiatives and demonstrate their appreciation to Members for their support. It's also a great opportunity for Members of Congress and their staffs to experience a day of fishing and gain a better understanding of issues important to the angling community.

Acting Director Hogan talked to the group about Service accomplishments, including the highly successful National Fish Passage Program, as well as the National Fish Habitat Initiative, a national level strategy aimed at increasing opportunities for fishing and other outdoor activities through the restoration of healthy fish habitat.

Displays were staffed by Maryland, Gloucester (Virginia), and Region 9 Fisheries Resource Offices and several non-government organizations, and featured interactive opportunities, including a chance to handle live sturgeon—a first for this event, thanks to our field office staff!

Matt Huggler, Legislative Affairs, Washington, DC

Newsome and Dave Smith, a supervisory natural resource specialist supervised the BAER activities on the ALE. A final accomplishment report, *Vegetation Recovery Report*, for the project is available online at <www.fws.gov/pacific/hanfordreach>.

Jenny Niemeyer, National Interagency Fire Center, Boise, Idaho

Fishing Awards. Acting Service Director Matt Hogan (second from left) and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks David P. Smith (third from left), were presented awards for their support of National Fishing and Boating Week. Both spent hours on the Mall helping some of the 350 elementary and middle school students try their luck during the June kickoff event. Hannibal Bolton (left), chief, Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance, Bennie Williams (fourth from left), a fisheries biologist and chairman of the National Fishing and Boating Week Steering Committee and Mamie Parker, Assistant Director, Fisheries and Habitat Conservation, presented the awards. Max, a companion dog-in-training, joined in the ceremonies. FWS photo: Nicholas Throckmorton.

Steve Farrell, Division of Visitor Services and Communications, Washington, DC



Transitions... Who's Coming and Going

Mitch Snow, who has served as chief of Media Services in the Service's Office of Public Affairs in Washington for the past 10 years, is the new communications coordinator at the Miami Art Museum in Florida. Snow was with the U.S. Geological Survey prior to joining the Service in 1995.

Pat Fisher, a 17-year Public Affairs veteran, is the new chief of the Federal Duck Stamp Office. During her Public Affairs tenure, Pat covered the Duck Stamp and Migratory Birds programs, Fisheries, Federal Assistance, and International Conservation and Law Enforcement. She is also a former editor of the Service newsletter, Fish and Wildlife News.

Cindy Hoffman, a public affairs specialist who helped develop the centennial celebration of the Service's Refuge System and worked on dozens of other special events and projects in her eight years in Public Affairs, is the new Vice President for Communications in the Washington office of Defenders of Wildlife.

Ben Ikenson, who edited the Fish and Wildlife News when he wasn't writing speeches, has left the Service to return to Albuquerque and a freelance writing career; **Ken Burton** is the new editor.

Renne R. Lohofener has been named Assistant Director for Endangered Species. Renne, an ecologist with NOAA Fisheries for six years prior to joining the Service, was most recently the Service's Texas

State Administrator for Ecological Services. Renne has also served as a field biologist, an Assistant Regional Director in the Southwest Region and as Chief in the Division of Endangered Species. He also did a stint as a research associate and Adjunct Professor at Mississippi State University.

Jennifer Kohout, who has been Legislative Liaison in Region 7 since 2000, is moving to Ecological Services to tackle administrative responsibility for the Selendang Ayu oil spill. The position she is vacating will be filled by Sue Detwiler, who is the previous Endangered Species Coordinator.

John Schroer ended his 16 years as manager of Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge on Assateague Island in Virginia last December. One of Schroer's big benchmarks was overseeing the completion of Chincoteague's Herbert H. Bateman Educational and Administrative Center, which has won awards and high praise for its environmentally sustainable design and construction. Schroer and his wife, Betsy, will make their home in South Carolina.

Dick Dyer brought his 28-year career with the Service to a close in April, when he and his wife, JoAnne, retired to Chesterville, Maine. Dyer said his time in the Service was "a dream-come-true experience," that gave him a chance to help conserve some of the most beautiful and special places in the United States. Dyer began his career as an endangered species biologist and went on to hold several management positions in the National Wildlife Refuge System, most recently as the Refuge Supervisor for the northern part of the Northeast Region.

The Guadagno Scholarships

The Service and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation announced the recipients of the first four Richard J. Guadagno Scholarships, named after Richard J. Guadagno, the manager of the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge who died aboard United Airlines Flight 93 in the terrorists attacks of September 11, 2001.

Kristin Engel and Amy Leist, graduate students at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California, were awarded \$2,000 each; Orlando Rocho, a Humboldt undergraduate, was awarded \$1,000 and Courtney Owens, a student at the College of the Redwoods in Eureka, California, was awarded \$500.

The awards are made to students whose work includes a natural resources-related research project that is particularly relevant to California's North Coast.

The scholarship fund was made possible through public donations and a matching amount from the Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Selections of Richard J. Guadagno Scholarship winners are made by a committee that includes representatives of the Guadagno family, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Service, the community and the schools.

Information about the Richard J. Guadagno Scholarship Fund is available on the Fish and Wildlife Foundation website, at <www.nfwf.org>.

Scholarship application information is available at the website, above, or may be obtained by E-mail to <Shannon_Smith@fws.gov>.

In Memoriam

Kevin Boyd, an equipment operator at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex, died July 12 of a heart attack following surgery at a hospital in Chico, California. Boyd had worked at Sacramento for 15 years. He was preceded in death by his wife, Cathie, and is survived by two children, Shelby and William. Boyd's family asked that donations go to the Enloe Foundation, 1448 Esplanade, Chico, California 95926.

Sandra Lee Ford Jeffers, an Administrative Officer in the Refuge Division, died March 6. Jeffers joined the Service in 1988. She was responsible for reconciling the Office of Budget and the Office of Technology and Management.

Lawrence William DeBates died July 16 while recuperating from surgery. DeBates served a large part of his Service career as assistant regional director in charge of refuges and wildlife in the Portland office. He retired in 1990. DeBates was preceded in death by his wife, Greta, and is survived by his daughters, Kari Penca of Tualatin, Oregon, Renae DeBates of Edina, Minnesota, Brenda DeBates of Corvallis, Oregon, and seven grandchildren. Memorials are suggested to Yamhill County CASA, 1075 SW Cedarwood Ave., McMinnville, Oregon 97128 or Friends of Yamhill County, P.O. Box 1083, McMinnville, Oregon 97128.

Prized catch for vets. *Some 50 veterans attended the 14th annual fishing tournament at the American Legion Fishing Pond at the Tomah, Wisconsin, Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center this year. Service employees at Wisconsin's Genoa National Fish hatchery raised a variety of game fish for stocking at the pond and volunteers from the hatchery, La Crosse Fishery Resource Office and the La Crosse Fish Health Center all pitched in, along with helpers from the Friends of the Upper Mississippi River Fishery Services and Tomah Middle School. The day was capped with prizes for catches—and a lunchtime fish fry. FWS photo.*

Fish & Wildlife Honors

An interagency team that created the Conservation Strategy for the Yellowstone Grizzly Bear received one of the two **Conservation Projects of the Year** awards at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Arlington last March. The award is a joint effort of the Department of Agriculture Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to recognize "exceptional conservation projects in the country." Service members on the team included **Chris Servheen**, a Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator, and **Terry Root**, who is with the Service with working on Grizzlies, and with the Forest Service otherwise.

Dave Ferguson, Branch Chief for the Near East, South Asia and Africa in the Service's Division of International Conservation, is the 2005 recipient of the Society for Conservation Biology's **Distinguished Service Award**. Ferguson's accomplishments have been extensive and included supporting studies of more than 100 threatened or endangered species and their habitats in 50 countries, providing opportunities for training, workshops and conferences, arranging travel of conservation professionals to the U.S., funding educational outreach materials and publishing countless brochures, proceedings and posters in other languages, and much, much more in the interest of international conservation.

Three Service employees earned the **Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award** for demonstrating outstanding leadership skills in wildland firefighting during 2004. **Todd Schmidt**, a fire program technician at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge in Kansas, and **Pat Harty**, a prescribed fire specialist at Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge in South Dakota, received the award as members of the Mid-Plains Interagency Handcrew Boss Team. **Paul Chamberlin**, a fire operations safety officer in Montana, received the award for promoting the "Lookout, Communication, Escape Routes Safety Zones" (LCES) training concept. LCES was created by Paul Gleason, a well-known Federal fire leader, mentor and teacher who died of cancer in 2003.

Kurt Forman, the South Dakota State coordinator for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, is the recipient of the **2005 Professional Award** given by the South Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society. Over the past seven years, Forman has written grants that secured more than \$14 million for habitat restoration activities on private and tribal lands throughout South Dakota, which paid for more than 2,200 projects that affected in excess of 175,000 acres of wetland and grassland habitat. Forman has also made hundreds of landowner contacts and has built strong relationships with countless non-government organizations.



Meet Me in St. Louis

For three days at the end of August, I joined more than 1,200 conservation leaders in St. Louis, Missouri, for the White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation. Participants represented nearly every conceivable entity engaged in on-the-ground conservation, including government at all levels, conservation groups, private corporations and countless individuals passionate about the future of our nation's natural resources.

I can't recall another gathering that pulled such a diverse crowd under a single roof to talk about conservation. One of the conference goals was to launch a new conservation dialogue and philosophy for the 21st century, building on a similar meeting called by Theodore Roosevelt 100 years ago.

Case studies presented during the conference covered an impressive range of subjects, providing dozens of opportunities to exchange information about projects and goals with common interests.

Being around so many people accomplishing great things for conservation was inspirational. As I spoke with conservation leaders from across the country and heard their stories, I got a true sense of what is possible when people work together. It's easy, and in many ways necessary, for us as an agency to focus on our own mission and resources. At the same time, we have to be careful not to miss opportunities to welcome the expertise and ideas of others. We simply can't accomplish our mission alone.

When it comes to Cooperative Conservation, I'm proud to note the Fish

and Wildlife Service is ahead of the game. Many of the partnerships we developed were featured at the conference as models for the rest of the nation.

For example, in the Southeast, we recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of the first Safe Harbor Agreement, which facilitated conservation of the red-cockaded woodpecker. Our Endangered Species folks worked tirelessly with the military and private landowners to put in place management protections for the woodpecker on thousands of acres of land, while providing flexibility that enables the land to be used for commercial and training purposes. These efforts are models for conservation efforts elsewhere.

Out West, the grassland and wetland complexes of the prairie pothole region provide vital habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds and songbirds. Most of the land is privately owned and managed by descendants of ranching families who homesteaded the area in the 1800s. A number of these families faced financial obstacles that prevented them from keeping their rangeland intact. Working to conserve the range, and the habitat it provides, the Service partnered with more than 1,400 ranching families and conservation organizations to protect more than 522,000 acres of wetland and grassland habitat in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota.

We also have a strong partnership in the Southwest with the White Mountain Apache Tribe, who have for decades protected habitat on their land and worked to benefit endangered species and other wildlife. We partnered with the Tribe on a successful

cooperative restoration effort for Apache and gila trout that may result in these fish being removed from the endangered species list in the next few years. The White Mountain Apaches also worked with the Service to develop a Mexican Wolf management plan, and entered into a formal cooperative agreement to implement that plan, providing a huge boost to our wolf recovery efforts. In addition, they are a full partner in efforts to recover the Mexican spotted owl on tribal lands.

Space does not permit me to list all the other partnerships we've developed. Still, there is much work to be done. I encourage you to keep looking for new opportunities to develop meaningful conservation partnerships—to meet me in St. Louis, if you will, as we work to conserve wildlife for the next generation.



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Matt Hogan

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